

February 26, 2010

Washington, DC--Today, U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (NY-24) announced The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has been awarded \$9.5 million in a matching grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to expand computer access in public libraries across New York State. The funding is being provided through the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (Recovery Bill) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP).

The grant will support the State Library's *Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary* project to help low-income, unemployed, underemployed, and other vulnerable populations in upstate New York. High unemployment rates, a distressed economy, and a lack of affordable public access to high-speed broadband services, education, training and technical support have been particularly acute in geographically isolated upstate communities. The grant will enable the State Library and its public library partners to purchase equipment to expand the public's access to computers and teleconferencing.

Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary will provide more than 860 computers in 30 libraries and five mobile training centers across 41 economically distressed upstate New York counties with populations totaling 6,655,824 (2008 census). This grant will allow libraries to extend hours, provide 24/7 access to job search resources, and serve an estimated 50,000 additional users per week system-wide.

New York State Education Commissioner David Steiner said, "Libraries are vital to our communities and our economy. The increased broadband capacity, training and online resources funded through this grant will provide more New Yorkers with access to essential online information for work, healthcare, education, and citizenship as well as E-government resources."

"What librarians and libraries do everyday is vitally important work," **said Arcuri**. "Yet, even

though New Yorkers turn to their public libraries more in difficult economic times, libraries themselves have suffered cuts and reductions to their valuable services. This grant will enable our libraries to continue to do critically important work and to expand the opportunities, education, and services that high speed Internet provides to the unserved and underserved in our communities."

The New York State Library, within NYSED, worked with partner libraries throughout the state and the New York State Office of the Chief Information Officer/Office for Technology (CIO/OFT) to submit the proposal for the grant. In order to participate in this matching grant, partner libraries must make an in-kind contribution to support the project. The total in-kind match is \$5.4 million. (A list of partner libraries accompanies this release.)

"CIO/OFT is very proud to continue supporting the innovative *Broadbandexpress@yourlibrary* project," said Dr. Melodie Mayberry-Stewart, New York State CIO, Director of the Office For Technology, and Chair of the Broadband Development and Deployment Council. "In these tough economic times, access to free resources is critical for New York's citizens. Many times, computers located in libraries are the only point of broadband contact for many citizens. Those who do not own a computer or have access to the internet often go to the library, where it is available for free. And for those who have never used a computer help is available. These grants will help ensure our libraries can continue to provide high-speed, reliable internet services and digital literacy training programs for our communities."

The Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, funded by ARRA, provides matching grants to support the deployment of broadband infrastructure in unserved and underserved areas, enhance and expand public computer centers, and encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service. Funded at \$4.7 billion, BTOP will also advance ARRA's objectives to spur job creation and stimulate long-term economic growth and opportunity.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided a total of \$7.2 billion to fund projects that will expand access to and adoption of broadband services. NTIA plans to announce all grant awards by September 30, 2010.

The New York State Library is the largest state library in the nation. In addition to its research collection of more than 20 million items, the State Library provides leadership and support to libraries and library systems throughout the state, maintains a Talking Book and Braille Library serving more than 39,000 New Yorkers, offers 24-hour access to an online catalog, and

provides residents with 24/7 access to *NOVELNY*, New York's first virtual library. The State Library is located in the Empire State Plaza in Albany. For information call 518/474-5355 or go to www.nysl.nysed.gov .